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Bonn's suicide-spy scare

By WELLINGTON LONG

BONN (UPI) — Newspaper reporters in the West German capital now begin their day by phoning the main government ministries to ask if any more members of their staffs have committed suicide, disappeared or been arrested for alleged espionage.

Since the night of Oct. 29 when 10 men of the federal criminal police office searched the home and office of and began interrogating a Czechoslovak journalist they said had been denounced for spying, newspapermen run a daily check of their professional colleagues, too.

Almost every day since early October has brought a new revelation in a spy scare that has resulted in a fresh study of the security services by chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger and his cabinet.

Gears don't mesh

It has also brought parliamentary demands for a full-scale investigation of the operations, jurisdictional disputes and alleged lack of cooperation among the various intelligence agencies, the police and the office of the federal prosecutor general.

Helmut Schmidt, parliamentary leader of Foreign Minister Willy Brandt's Social Democratic Party, expressed the general sense of frustration when he said that while foreign spies assigned here obviously work through the weekends, the anti-spy services just as obviously do not.

He was making reference to the case of Adm. Hermann Luedke, found dead in a woods near Bonn Oct. 8. This was a few days after military counter-intelligence agents questioned him about a miniature film containing pictures of several documents marked "NATO secret."

No arrest warrant was made out against Luedke, partly because Bonn city police claimed they were unable to locate any member of the office of the federal prosecutor general over the weekend.

The stolen missile

More ludicrous than the "German Weekend" that has now supplanted the "English weekend" as a description of official inactivity, is the case of the stolen missile and two fighter aircraft navigational devices.

Air Force pilot Wolf-Diethart Knoppe, locksmith Josef Linowski and architect Manfred Ramminger are accused of stealing the missile and one of the navigational devices from Neuburg air force base in Bavaria. Linowski and Ramminger have been charged with removing the second navigational apparatus from a Hanover air show exhibition hall during daylight hours.

When they stole the navigational device from Neuburg, the thieves made a lot of noise breaking open a metal hangar door, and then spent an hour wandering along the fence around the base in a dense fog trying to establish contact with an accomplice waiting with a car on the other side.

To remove the missile, they simply cut a hole in the fence, and handed it through to the accomplice.

The base commander, Lt. Col. Gerhard Mohrdieck, who is either humorless or a natural at throwing off funny one-liners, told reporters the thieves were plenty lucky.

Might have been shot

"The soldiers guarding this base are quite alert at night, and might have shot at the trespassers had they spotted them," said Mohrdieck.

The thieves discovered the missile was too long to fit inside the car, the federal prosecutor general said, so they knocked out the rear window, and let the head of the rocket stick through it.

They covered it with an old blanket or carpet, and no one, including gasoline station attendants who serviced the automobile, paid it any attention.

The Germans often complain their police spend more time ticketing automobiles for overparking and other minor infractions than they do chasing criminals.

It was in this mood that the "Stadt Anzeiger" of Cologne suggested the thieves must also have hung a red flag from the tip of the rocket protruding beyond the car's rear bumper, because otherwise highway police would have hauled them in on the 335-mile drive across Germany.

Suicide wave

Admiral Luedke's apparent suicide was the first of six during the last three weeks of October of

officers and federal government employees.

On the same day Luedke's body was found, Lt. Gen. Horst Wendtland deputy chief of the federal intelligence agency, shot himself in his office. Government spokesmen said he was suffering from an incurable disease.

On Oct. 19, Lt. Col. Johannes Grimm, of the defense ministry's section on mobilization, shot himself in his office, in what officials say was a fit of depression resulting from an unfounded fear that he had cancer.